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ABSTRACT

During the 1986-1987 school year, a study was undertaken to examine four issues that are critical to business and office occupations education (BOE) in Connecticut. These issues were whether (1) the primary purpose of secondary BOE should be to prepare students for specific occupations or to prepare students for other goals; (2) standard competencies or traditional grading standards should be used to measure students' skills; (3) students entering BOE programs should be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before entry into the program; and (4) BOE should stress skill development or whether equal emphasis should be placed on management and logical thinking skills. The procedures used included a literature review; a survey of the business community, business teachers, high school principals, superintendents of schools, and guidance personnel; a review of the Connecticut Assessment of Educational Progress in Business and Office Education; and reviews of Connecticut's existing business curriculum and common core of learning. The study indicated that although there is some movement in some schools to address the aforementioned issues, such efforts are clearly not being made in all of the state's schools. For these reasons, it was recommended that the statewide curriculum be reviewed and that specific curriculum changes be made in the curriculum. Specifically, units on critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, logical thinking, human relations, management, and communications should be included. (A bibliography of the sources consulted in the literature review and a list of the critical issues in business education survey are appended.) (MN)

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CRITICAL ISSUES IN BOE AND THEIR IMPACT ON CONNECTICUT BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

FINAL REPORT

PREPARED BY
RESCUE
LITCHFIELD, CT

PREPARED FOR

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL, TECHNICAL AND ADULT EDUCATION
BUREAU OF VOCATIONAL SERVICES
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CRITICAL ISSUES IN BOE AND THEIR IMPACT ON CONNECTICUT BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1986-87 school year, funds were provided through the State Department of Education to undertake a study of the issues critical to Business Educators in Connecticut.

An invitation was extended to Business and Office Educators throughout the state to participate in this project.

The committee studied the following critical issues:

1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs focus on preparing students for specific occupations or should the primary purpose of the curriculum focus on preparing students for other goals?

2. Should standard competencies for skill courses be used to assess students' skills or should traditional grading standards be utilized to measure students' skills?

3. Should entering students in secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs or should no screening or testing of students be used for entering students?

4. Should the major emphasis of business training programs continue to stress skill development or should equal emphasis on management skills and logical thinking skills be given to these programs?

The procedures for the study included:

1) A review of literature.
2) A survey of the business community, business teachers, high school principals, superintendents of schools and guidance personnel.
3) Review of CAEP/BOE (Connecticut Assessment of Educational Progress in Business and Office Education).
4) Review of the existing business curriculum--Connecticut State Business and Office Education (CAEP/BOE)--Curriculum for the 80's.
5) Review of Connecticut's Common Core of Learning.

Evaluation of the project was based on the following:

1) Teams were established to deal with the four, procedures outlined above.
2) Committee and team meetings were held.
3) Drafts were prepared and reviewed and critiqued.
4) This final copy of the report will be distributed to Connecticut Business Educators.

I. REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE

The 1986 issues of the Business Education Forum, the Delta Pi Epsilon Journal, and The Journal of Business Education were reviewed for common themes and issues facing business educators today. (See Appendix A)

SUMMARY:

It is repeatedly mentioned that as the evolution to a more highly automated office occurs, three classes of skills need to be included in the business curriculum. These are identified as: (1) generalizable skills--those actively used in work performance which are transferable across jobs and occupations (math skills, reasoning, written and oral communication, interpersonal, technological, and attitudinal skills); (2) transition skills--used to manage life transitions (making decisions, managing changes in the environment and relationships, managing stress, love, grief); and (3) problem-solving skills--employed in the resolution of problematic situations (task, information, and interpersonal).

ISSUES:

In response to the four questions posed, the following results are noted:

1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs focus on preparing students for specific occupations or should the primary purpose of the curriculum focus on preparing students for other goals?

   Materials reviewed stressed that the career path of students would be greatly enhanced through developing skills and knowledge that help them into careers that are satisfying and offer opportunities for advancement.

   Part of the business and office training should focus on communications and management in addition to technological skills. A high priority and consensus is that personality traits and people skills are one of the major factors in preparing students for entry-level positions and career advancement.

2. Should standard competencies for skill courses be used to assess students' skills or should traditional grading standards be utilized to measure students' skills?

   None of the materials reviewed gave specific recommendations that standard competencies for skill courses should be used.

3. Should entering students in secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs or should no screening or testing of students be used for entering students?

There is no information in the materials reviewed that entering students in secondary business education programs should be tested.

4. Should the major emphasis of business training programs continue to stress skill development or should equal emphasis on management skills and logical thinking skills be given to these programs?

One of the major goals of teaching is to train students to be thinkers and problem solvers. The case method is one manner given in which to teach students to apply theories and concepts and encourage them to question and analyze. Role playing is another way to foster communication, reasoning and analytical skills as well as demonstrate how political factors influence public policy making.

II. REVIEW OF CAEP, BOE CURRICULUM GUIDES AND CONNECTICUT'S COMMON CORE OF LEARNING

The following materials were reviewed to determine if "critical issues" are currently being addressed:

1. Connecticut Assessment of Educational Progress
2. Business & Office Education Curriculum Guides
3. Connecticut's Common Core of Learning

ISSUES

1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs focus on preparing students for specific occupations or should the primary purpose of the curriculum focus on preparing students for other goals?

   None of the materials reviewed gave specific recommendations that this should be the primary purpose.

2. Should standard competencies for skill courses be used to assess students' skills or should traditional grading standards be utilized to measure students' skills?

   Some standard competencies in skill areas are found in the materials. In reviewing the "Curriculum for the 80's" guide, it was recommended that students enrolled in a business management course achieve at least a 65% proficiency level on a criteria reference exam. In the same source, it is recommended that business applications courses (notetaking reinforcement and speed building) students take unfamiliar dictation at a minimum speed of 80 words per minute for 3 minutes with 95% accuracy and transcribe typical business correspondence error free or in mailable form. CAEP results provide standards in notetaking and information processing also.

3. Should entering students in secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs or should no screening or testing of students be used for entering students?

   Nothing in the materials reviewed indicate that entering students in secondary business education programs should be tested.

4. Should the major emphasis of business training programs continue to stress skill development or should equal emphasis on management skills and logical thinking skills be given to these programs?

Review of the material indicates that "management skills" and "logical thinking skills" should be emphasized. Students enrolled in a communications course should be able to effectively use decision-making skills. Course objectives and content of an advanced functions course (transcription using or word processor) suggest the inclusion of decision-making and organizational skills.

SUMMARY

The materials reviewed indicate that the primary purpose of business education is not to prepare for specific occupations; but to "serve all students--those who plan to enter the job market upon graduation as well as those who plan to further their formal study in post-secondary institutions and to help them make intelligent decision in their personal business affairs.

There is no evidence in the materials reviewed of any testing or screening being done prior to entry into business education programs. The committee recommends no further investigation in this area. However, the need for more emphasis on management and logical thinking skills is found in the materials reviewed.

The committee recommends no further investigation in this area. However, the need for more emphasis on management logical thinking skills is found in the materials reviewed.

III. SURVEY

A copy of the survey will be found in appendix B. It was mailed to Connecticut superintendents, large school principals, guidance counselors, business educators, and to selected employers.

A total of eight questions were asked--one of which was a general comment question. Results of the survey have been compiled into three groups: total responses (number and percent); responses of Business Education teachers (number and percent); responses of groups other than Business Education Teachers. The results are broken out on the next four pages.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT SURVEY RESULTS
CRITICAL ISSUES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to focus on preparing students for specific occupations? If yes, then	355 64%	198 36%
a. should the major emphasis be to stress skill development? or	117 54%	109 46%
b. should the major emphasis be to stress critical thinking skills? or	91 44%	118 56%
c. should the major emphasis be placed equally on developing management skills and logical thinking skills?	380 93%	29 7%
2. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to prepare students for personal use survival skills as opposed to specific occupational training?	180 33%	374 67%
3. Should statewide standardized competencies for skills courses be used to assess student achievement?	262 46%	304 54%
4. Should establishment of standards and measurement of student achievement be left to the discretion of individual school districts?	369 65%	197 35%
5. Should students entering secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs?	315 56%	253 44%
6. Should preliminary screening or testing be used for entering secondary business education students?	226 41%	320 59%
7. Is there a need to require all secondary business education graduates to have completed a minimum of:		
a. one semester of electronic keyboarding?	503 91%	48 9%
b. one semester of word processing?	464 85%	80 15%
c. one semester of electronic spreadsheets?	300 56%	232 44%
d. one semester of computer database management?	290 55%	235 45%

To provide an appreciation for the feelings of superintendents; high school principals; guidance counselors; and selected employers, a separate tally of their responses was made. This was necessitated by the fact that the greatest number of returns were from business teachers.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT SURVEY RESULTS
CRITICAL ISSUES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

A total of 425 teachers responded to this survey

QUESTIONS	TEACHER SURVEY PERCENTAGE OF RESPONS YES	NO
1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to focus on preparing students for specific occupations? If yes, then	64%	36%
a. should the major emphasis be to stress skill development? or	54%	46%
b. should the major emphasis be to stress critical thinking skills? or	39%	61%
c. should the major emphasis be placed equally on developing management skills and logical thinking skills?	80%	20%
2. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to prepare students for personal use survival skills as opposed to specific occupational training?	31%	69%
3. Should statewide standardized competencies for skills courses be used to assess student achievement?	42%	58%
4. Should establishment of standards and measurement of student achievement be left to the discretion of individual school districts?	67%	33%
5. Should students entering secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs?	50%	50%
6. Should preliminary screening or testing be used for entering secondary business education students?	36%	64%
7. Is there a need to require all secondary business education graduates to have completed a minimum of:		
a. one semester of electronic keyboarding?	92%	8%
b. one semester of word processing?	84%	16%
c. one semester of electronic spreadsheets?	57%	43%
d. one semester of computer database management?	58%	42%

STATE OF CONNECTICUT SURVEY RESULTS
CRITICAL ISSUES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

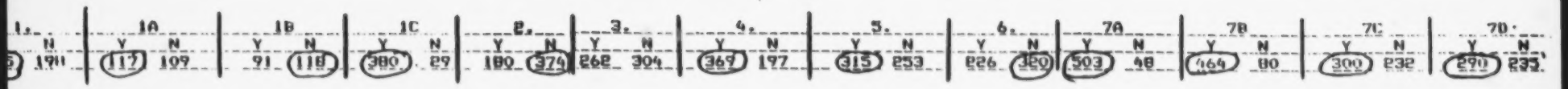
The following respondents are included here:
60 Business persons, 46 High School Guidance Counselors, 10 High School Principals, 8 Board of Education Members, 5 Superintendents of Schools and 3 High School Librarians.

QUESTIONS	OTHER THAN TEACHER SURV PERCENTAGE OF RESPONS YES	NO
1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to focus on preparing students for specific occupations? If yes, then	64%	36%
a. should the major emphasis be to stress skill development? or	43%	57%
b. should the major emphasis be to stress critical thinking skills? or	53%	47%
c. should the major emphasis be placed equally on developing management skills and logical thinking skills?	91%	9%
2. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to prepare students for personal use survival skills as opposed to specific occupational training?	38%	62%
3. Should statewide standardized competencies for skills courses be used to assess student achievement?	60%	40%
4. Should establishment of standards and measurement of student achievement be left to the discretion of individual school districts?	61%	39%
5. Should students entering secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs?	68%	32%
6. Should preliminary screening or testing be used for entering secondary business education students?	61%	39%
7. Is there a need to require all secondary business education graduates to have completed a minimum of:		
a. one semester of electronic keyboarding?	89%	11%
b. one semester of word processing?	90%	10%
c. one semester of electronic spreadsheets?	55%	45%
d. one semester of computer database management?	47%	53%

STATE OF CONNECTICUT SURVEY RESULTS
CRITICAL ISSUES TO BUSINESS EDUCATION*

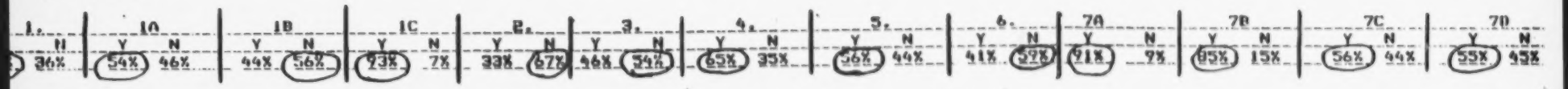
SURVEY RESULTS

TOTAL NUMBER
OF RESPONSES



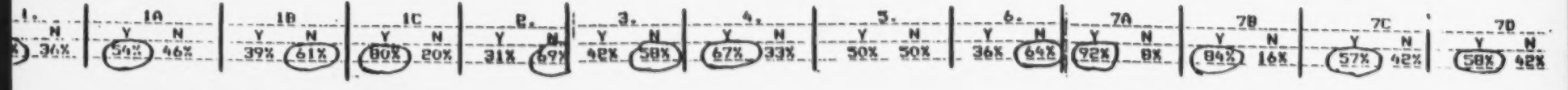
SURVEY RESULTS

TOTAL NUMBER
PERCENTAGE



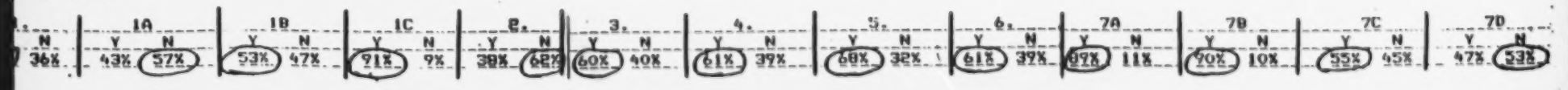
SURVEY RESULTS

PERCENTAGE
TEACHER
RESULTS



SURVEY RESULTS

PERCENTAGE
OTHER THAN
TEACHERS
RESULTS



*The most frequent response is circled.

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ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs focus on preparing students for specific occupations.

   YES is the majority response.

   64% of those responding agree that the focus should be on preparing students for specific occupations.

   In addition, respondents were given the opportunity to comment on critical thinking and/or skill development.

   93% felt that management and logical thinking skills were a major area of importance. This response is item C of the three choices.

2. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to prepare students for personal use survival skills as opposed to specific occupational training?

   67% of those responding say that the primary purpose of secondary business education IS NOT to prepare students for personal use survival skills as opposed to specific occupational training.

3. Should statewide standardized competencies for skills courses be used to assess student achievement?

   54% - NO
   46% - YES

4. Should establishment of standards and measurement of student achievement be left to the discretion of individual school districts?

   65% - YES
   35% - NO

5. Should entering students in secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs or should no screening or testing of students be used for entering students?

   56% of the respondents say students entering secondary business education programs should be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs.

   44% want no preliminary screening or testing in basic abilities.

6. Should preliminary screening or testing be used for entering secondary business education students?

   Overall 59% of the respondents agreed that NO preliminary screening or testing should be done.

7. Is there a need to require all secondary business education graduates to have completed a minimum of:

   a. one semester of electronic keyboarding?
   b. one semester of word processing?
   c. one semester of electronic spreadsheets?
   d. one semester of computer database management?

   91% say an electronic keyboarding course should be required of all secondary business education graduates.

   85% say a word processing course should be required of all secondary business education graduates.

   There was an almost even split on the question of offering electronic spreadsheet and database management courses.

An opportunity was provided for individuals to make additional comments. The following is a summary of those responding.

1. Business students should possess a "core" of basic business skills before graduating from high school. Included among these are the ability to demonstrate (a) good job habits--pride of workmanship, good attendance, proper dress, positive attitude, dependability, ability to interact favorably with fellow employees and business customers; (b) use of common sense in basic business procedures; i.e., ability to use good judgement and critical thinking sills; (c) an understanding of employment procedures; and (d) good communication skills--both oral and written.

2. Most high school systems have a general testing program for their students. The State mandates proficiency testing in the areas of language arts, reading, mathematics and writing. Results of these tests are available to teachers from their local guidance office.

3. Secondary business education should provide equal opportunities for training in specific occupations as well as for general business skills. This dual purpose provides greater flexibility in the business curriculum and enrollment opportunities for nonbusiness students.

4. Establishing statewide standards--based upon teacher and employer input--is a useful tool in enabling LEA's to evaluate and improve their business programs.

1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs focus on preparing students for specific occupations or should the primary purpose of the curriculum focus on preparing students for other goals?

   A majority of those responding (64%) agreed that preparation for specific occupations should be the primary focus. 93% of respondents stated that management and logical thinking skills are margin areas to be included in training. 67% stated that the primary purpose of secondary business education is not to prepare students for personal use survival skills. 91% agreed that electronic keyboarding should be required of all secondary business education graduates and 85% agreed that a word processing course should be required. Electronic spreadsheets and data base management courses received even positive and negative notes.

   Recommendations:

   A minimum of one semester of electronic keyboarding be required of all secondary business education graduates.

   A minimum of one semester of word processing be required of all business education graduates.

   The business and office education program should continue to provide specific occupational training including, but not limited to, techniques to teach problem solving, decision-making, and organizational and human relations skills.

2. Should standard competencies for skill courses be used to assess students' skills or should traditional grading standards be utilized to measure students' skills?

   54% stated no standard competencies should be used. 65% stated that standards of student achievement should be left to the discretion of the school districts.

3. Should entering students in secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs or should no screening or testing of students be used for entering students?

   56% stated that the above basic skills should be tested to determine student competencies. 59% of the respondents agreed that no preliminary screening or testing should be done for entering secondary business education students.

Recommendation:
To provide greater flexibility, the business education departments should serve all students--those entering the job market upon graduation as well as those entering post-secondary institutions.

4. Should the major emphasis of business training programs continue to stress skill development or should equal emphasis on management skills and logical thinking skills be given to these programs?

Management and logical thinking skills weighed heavily for preparation for occupations.
Recommendation:
Equal emphasis be placed on management, logical thinking skills,
and communication skills.

THE CURRENT BOE CURRICULUM IN LIGHT OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES RESULTS.

This project was undertaken to determine whether or not the critical issues in business education, both on the national and state level, are being addressed in the business education classrooms. The results of the study indicate that there is some movement in some of the schools to address the issues. But it is clear that this is not being done in all schools. Therefore, the committee recommends the following:

1. Current review of state-wide curriculum.
2. Specific curriculum recommendations contained within this report must be implemented into the curriculum.
3. Major changes in curriculum implementation will include units in critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, logical thinking, human relations, management and communications.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. A minimum of one semester of electronic keyboarding be required of all secondary business education graduates.

2. A minimum of one semester of word processing be required of all secondary business education graduates.

3. Equal emphasis be placed on management, logical thinking skills, and communication skills.

4. The business and office education program should continue to provide specific occupational training including, but not limited to, techniques to teach problem solving, decision-making, and organizational and human relations skills.

5. To provide greater flexibility, the business education departments should serve all students--those entering the job market upon graduation as well as those entering post-secondary institutions.

Appendix A

Review of Current Literature

An extensive review of the literature was conducted. The articles listed below were of major significance to the study.

Adding A Full Curriculum. Gordon Minty. Voc Ed J 61: 34-35 Ag

Basic Skills In Business Education. Michael Bronner. BEA J 39-45 Spring '85.

Business Education In "Excellent" Schools. Kevin F. Mulcahy and James A. Manos. NABTE Rev 13: 13-20

Business Teacher Education, Criteria For Excellence: Curriculum Guide. National Business Education Association, 129 1914 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091

A Case For General Education In The Business Curriculum. Paul Miller. Bal Sheet 68: 17-20 N-D

Curriculum For The Real World: Getting Business Into The Classroom. Irene Smith. BEA J 28-34 Spring

Curriculum Improvement. Betty L. Schroeder and Lorraine T. Furtado. Bus Ed Forum Yearbook Issue 40: 32, 36-40 Ap-My

Decision-Making skills Developed Through Computerized Simulation. Deborah Holderfield, Joseph Arn, and Terry Roach. Bus Ed Forum 40: 25-26 Ap

Determining Core Competencies Necessary For Success In The Automated Office. Art McEntee. BEA J 18-26 Spring '85

Does Your Middle-School Business Education Program Need A Transfusion? Charles Gorgoglione and Lynne Hannum. Bal Sheet 67: 27-28 Mr-Ap

How The Work Turns: Tomorrow's Jobs And Business Education. Kenneth B. Hoyt. An Action Agenda for Business Education. South-Western. 37-50

Keeping The High School Business Program. Donna Jerome. BTA J 7: 55-56 Fall

Management Skills Needed By All. Paul S. Goldberg. Bus Ed Forum 40: 35-36 Ap

A Model For Managerial Communication. Larry Smeltzer, Janice Glab, Steven Golen, and Jeanette Gilsdorf. ABC Bul 49: 35-38 S

The Office Of The Future. Janet L. DeMott. An Action Agenda for Business Education. South-Western. 51-60

Past, Present And Future: The Invisible Curriculum In Business. Barbara L. Christen. BEA J 11-21 Spring

A Pretechnical Curriculum For Self-Empowerment. Ann H. Karmos, Joseph S. Karmos, Cheryl A. Presley, and M. Harry Daniels. JEB 61: 277-280 Fall '85

Resources For Updating A Curriculum. Wesley E. Budke and Charles Selkow. Voc Ed J 61: 31-33 AG

Skills, Knowledge, And Attitudes Necessary For Success At An Administrative Support Workstation. Jean Swanson. Arizona State University, PH. D thesis '85

The Teacher's Role In Curriculum Change. James E. LaPorte. Voc Ed J 61: 25-26 Ag

Upgrading The Marketing Curriculum: The Integration Of High-order Skills. Nancy L. Schoettinger. Mktg Educators; J 11: 52-58 Fall 85'

APPENDIX B

STATE OF CONNECTICUT SURVEY
Critical Issues in Business Education

QUESTIONS

1. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to focus on preparing students for specific occupations? If yes, then — YES NO

   a. should the major emphasis be to stress skill development? — YES NO

   or

   b. should the major emphasis be to stress critical thinking skills? — YES NO

   or

   c. should the major emphasis be placed equally on developing management skills and logical thinking skills? — YES NO

2. Should the primary purpose of secondary business education programs be to prepare students for personal use survival skills as opposed to specific occupational training? — YES NO

3. Should statewide standardized competencies for skills courses be used to assess student achievement? — YES NO

4. Should establishment of standards and measurement of student achievement be left to the discretion of individual school districts? — YES NO

5. Should students entering secondary business education programs be tested for basic abilities in reading, math, and writing before they enter these programs? — YES NO

6. Should preliminary screening or testing be used for entering secondary business education students? — YES NO

7. Is there a need to require all secondary business education graduates to have completed a minimum of:

   a. one semester of electronic keyboarding? — YES NO
   b. one semester of word processing? — YES NO
   c. one semester of electronic spreadsheets? — YES NO
   d. one semester of computer database management? — YES NO

8. On the reverse side of this form, please indicate other suggestions which you may have regarding the training and education of business education students.